

Cheboygan have taken enormous pride in the *Mackinaw* as the ship and her crew worked to keep shipping lanes open. In its first year of service, the ship opened waterways nearly six weeks ahead of schedule, which allowed vital cargo to reach its destination and kept our nation's war machine running at top capacity.

As the nation shifted to peacetime production, the *Mackinaw* kept up its wartime pace. It continued to break up ice several feet thick every spring to ensure the safe arrival of essential raw materials for the steel and auto industries of Pennsylvania, Ohio, Indiana, and Michigan. The *Mackinaw* has seen the extraordinary expansion of American industry, and made an extraordinary contribution to that expansion.

Mr. Speaker, my most fond memory of the *Mackinaw* is the bitterly cold winter of 1993–1994. During that winter, the *Mackinaw* showed her brute ice-breaking strength time and time again. The *Mackinaw* freed countless vessels from frozen icy impasses. She has rescued stranded boaters, provided safe passage, and even rescued animals in peril.

Staff of the *Mackinaw* so admire the vessel and the Cheboygan community that they gather every five years for a reunion of current and past shipmates.

Mr. Speaker, the *Mackinaw* and her crew have played a role not only in national and international commerce, but also in more local relationships. The crew of the *Mackinaw* has long been an important part of the community in Cheboygan, with members pitching in to fight fires, forming relationships with residents, and many even settling in Cheboygan after their retirement.

As we move closer to 2006 when this historic vessel is decommissioned and replaced with a new cutter *Mackinaw*, Mr. Speaker, I ask the House to join me in paying tribute to the U.S. Coast Guard cutter *Mackinaw* and her crews over the last 60 years. They deserve our deepest gratitude, and I wish them well when they gather next month to celebrate 60 years of fond memories.

PROPOSED AMERICAN HEALTH BENEFITS PROGRAM

HON. JAMES R. LANGEVIN

OF RHODE ISLAND

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, July 22, 2004

Mr. LANGEVIN. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of a health care proposal that I am proud to introduce.

For years now, elected officials at all levels of government have struggled to address the nation's health-care crisis, and meet the ever-increasing demand for affordable health care. A significant part of the population lacks access to the most basic health coverage. In 2002, 43.6 million Americans were uninsured—80 percent of whom were members of working families. Closing this gap is one of the greatest domestic challenges our nation faces.

As health-insurance premiums rise each year, businesses face difficult decisions. To maintain the same level of coverage, they must either cover these extra costs or pass them along to employees. Many business owners confront an even starker choice: Decrease benefits or drop coverage altogether.

Those of us in Congress have a responsibility to ensure that no family is forced to go

without health coverage. My proposal for meaningful health care reform requires a commitment from the government to act in the best interest of its citizens.

A national template for this type of coverage—one that every Member of Congress is intimately familiar with—already exists: the Federal Employee Health Benefits Program (FEHBP). Through the Office of Personnel Management (OPM), the federal government manages health insurance for more than 8 million federal employees, retirees and dependents. This program, composed of private insurance carriers, is administered by the federal government, which assumes responsibility for approving or disapproving carriers, negotiating benefit and rate changes, and auditing carriers' operations under the law. With incredibly low administrative costs and a below-average annual premium increase, the federal government has been able offer a wide variety of choices and protections to its employees and Members of Congress.

My legislation offers a framework for a system wherein all Americans are offered the opportunity to participate in an FEHBP-style program—called the American Health Benefits Program (AHBP). Under this design, all Americans not eligible for existing federal programs—such as TRICARE, Veterans Health Programs, Indian Health Services, Medicare and Medicaid will be required to participate. The government will provide a defined contribution toward every enrollee's premium and actively manage and regulate the process of informed consumer choice, motivating private insurance companies to produce a favorable combination of efficiency and equity. Plans will compete for enrollees on the basis of benefits as well as efficiency, service and price.

Employers will be relieved of the annual burden of having to negotiate new health care packages for their employees. They will continue to play a critical role in the health care system through a flat tax on payroll—which promises to be more stable and consistent than premiums offered to them by insurance companies.

It is time we started offering every American the kind of coverage and oversight that we, as Members of Congress, have come to rely upon. Health care is much more than an issue that polls well with voters. As elected officials, we must take the incremental steps needed to develop a universal health-care system that is affordable, high-quality and well managed.

I firmly believe that health care is a basic inalienable right of every American. If we work together to address this critical issue, I know we can realize this goal.

HONORING LUKE PALDER ON THE COMPLETION OF HIS INTERNSHIP

HON. BART GORDON

OF TENNESSEE

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, July 22, 2004

Mr. GORDON. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor Luke Palder on the completion of his internship. Luke has been a tremendous help to me and my staff while he has interned in my Washington, DC, office this summer.

This is Luke's second summer as an intern for a member of the House of Representatives, which is remarkable when you consider

that Luke will begin his senior year of high school this fall.

Luke dedicates himself to excellence, and he commits himself fully to every project he undertakes. His internship in my office has been no exception. He has received the highest praise from constituents who have toured the U.S. Capitol with him. And he has proven himself to be a valuable addition to the office.

Luke treats everyone he meets with kindness and respect. With his dedication and determination, I am sure that he will be successful in every endeavor he pursues. I wish him all the best in the future.

PAYING TRIBUTE TO RAY DOMENICO

HON. SCOTT MCINNIS

OF COLORADO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, July 22, 2004

Mr. MCINNIS. Mr. Speaker, it is with a heavy heart that I rise today to honor Ray Domenico of Welby, Colorado. Ray recently passed away from a stomach illness at the age of seventy-four. He will be remembered as the consummate farmer and a true American patriot. It is my privilege to recognize the life and memory of Ray before this body of Congress and this nation.

Ray was born and raised on a farm in Welby, Colorado. Following high school, Ray enlisted in the United States Navy and proudly served our country on a destroyer during the Korean War. After returning from the war, Ray returned to his roots and worked on his family farm. Ray spent many hours out of the day cultivating both fruits and vegetables. He was known for his work ethic, and he instilled the ethic in his children by leading through example.

For Ray, family was the most important part of his life. When he returned home from the Korean War he married Agnes in 1954. Ray and Agnes had known each other for most of their lives, since Agnes grew up on the neighboring farm. The couple raised a large family of thirteen children, with an even larger second generation comprised of thirty-eight grandchildren.

Mr. Speaker, the Welby community will sorely miss Ray Domenico. Throughout the farm community, he will be known for his hard work and dedication to the cultivation of his crops. In this difficult time of bereavement, I wish to express my deepest condolences to his family and friends.

REMEMBERING ROY BURKE "R.B." HEAD, JR.

HON. RALPH M. HALL

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, July 22, 2004

Mr. HALL. Mr. Speaker, I am honored today to pay tribute to an outstanding citizen and beloved family man, the late Roy Burke Head, Jr., of Whitesboro, who passed away on April 7 at the age of 92. A stranger to none, he was affectionately known to his friends and family as R.B. or simply "B."

R.B. was a kind and generous man who devoted his life to his family, his community, and

his country. He served in the U.S. Army for 5 years and for 50 years worked as a buyer for the wholesale grocery firm, Tyler and Simpson. He retired to pursue his interests of cattle, photography and reading. R.B. also was active in his community, serving as an elder and church treasurer of the First Presbyterian Church. He was a longstanding member of Kiwanis Club—serving for almost 40 years and touting a perfect attendance record until the last few months of his life. He was an avid sports fan, and no distance was too great for him to travel to watch his grandchildren's sporting events.

R.B. also was a devoted family man. He leaves behind his loving wife of 61 years, Lucile Allen Head; his children Judith Anderson Reedy and husband Rick of Frisco, and Sally Burke Light and husband George of Collinsville; seven grandchildren; four great-grandchildren; brother Bill Head and wife Anne of Austin; sister-in-law Mary Ann Allen of Whitesboro and many other family members.

R.B. was a man of honor and integrity who was admired and respected by all those who knew him. He will long be remembered for his leadership, his compassion, and his enthusiasm for life. As we adjourn today, let us do so in memory of this outstanding citizen, Roy Burke Head, Jr.

A BILL TO EXTEND THE AUTHORITY OF THE ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON FORMER PRISONERS OF WAR

HON. STEPHANIE HERSETH

OF SOUTH DAKOTA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, July 22, 2004

Ms. HERSETH. Mr. Speaker, today I introduce a bill that authorizes a 6-year extension in authority for the Veterans Administration's (VA) Advisory Committee on Former Prisoners of War.

It is estimated that, since the American Revolution, more than 500,000 Americans have been captured and incarcerated as prisoners of war. Since World War I, more than 142,000 Americans—including 83 women—have been captured and interned as POWs. Not included in this figure are nearly 93,000 Americans who were lost in battle and whose whereabouts are unknown. Almost 16,000 POWs are currently in receipt of compensation for service-connected injuries, diseases, or illnesses from the Federal Government.

In 1981, Congress created the Advisory Committee on Former Prisoners of War (Committee). It is comprised of POWs from World War II, the Korean Conflict, Vietnam, and the Gulf War, as well as other individuals who are recognized authorities in such fields as psychiatry, psychology, internal medicine, nutrition, epidemiology, geriatrics, including persons knowledgeable about disabilities prevalent among former POWs, and disabled veterans.

The Committee advises the Secretary of Veterans Affairs on the administration of benefits under Title 38, United States Code, for veterans who are former prisoners of war and the needs of such veterans in the areas of service-connected compensation, health care and rehabilitation.

The Committee assesses the needs of former prisoners of war in the area of service-

connected compensation, health care, and rehabilitation. It also reviews the VA programs and activities designed to meet such needs. Lastly, it develops such recommendations as it considers appropriate, including recommendations for administrative and legislative action. This committee then prepares biennial reports that are submitted to the Secretary on these issues.

The Committee plays an important role by ensuring that the concerns of America's former prisoners of war are heard and that their needs are met. I am very pleased to introduce this bill today and look forward to working with my colleagues to ensure swift passage of this legislation to allow the Committee to continue its important work.

PAYING TRIBUTE TO KENDAY KAMARA

HON. THOMAS G. TANCREDO

OF COLORADO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, July 22, 2004

Mr. TANCREDO. Mr. Speaker, hundreds of students graduate for colleges and universities everyday, on rare occasions there is a student that stands out. I would like to take a moment to recognize one student that has overcome great obstacles to earn his graduate degree and honors. Kenday Kamara was awarded the 2004 Graduate Student of the Year from the University of Phoenix.

Mr. Kamara's life in Sierra Leone was anything but peaceful. As a journalist for the Sierra Leone Digest, Mr. Kamara wrote an editorial appealing for the peaceful resolution to the conflict that was raging in his homeland. Such an act of expression would often go unnoticed here in America; however in Sierra Leone, Mr. Kamara and his family were tormented for this act. He finally received asylum in the United States in 1998, and was later reunited with his family here in 1999.

Mr. Speaker, it is my distinct pleasure to honor Mr. Kamara and his achievements here today, and wish him all the best in her future endeavors.

PAYING TRIBUTE TO MIKE O'NEILL

HON. SCOTT MCINNIS

OF COLORADO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, July 22, 2004

Mr. MCINNIS. Mr. Speaker, to place your life in danger for the safety of your fellow citizens is an honorable and noble task, and our police officers do this on a regular basis. Commander Mike O'Neill of the Denver Police Department is one such hero, and after thirty-seven years of dedicated service, he recently announced his retirement. I would like to take this opportunity to thank him for the important role he has played in protecting the citizens of Colorado before this body of Congress and this nation.

At the point in Mike's youth when it came time to commit to his future and decide his vocation, he decided to become a police officer. The choice was obvious for him considering his father had also served as a police officer.

In 1967, Mike joined the Denver Police Department working in the city's second district. During his thirty-seven year career, he has worked in units covering drugs and gangs, shifts covering night and day, and he has held positions as district commander, division chief and head of the police academy.

As he embarks on retirement, he finishes his career in patrolling the same district where he began. After over thirty years with the department, he can take pride in knowing he has carried on his family's proud legacy of commitment to serving others. In his retirement, he and his wife Suzy, another former police officer, can enjoy a more relaxing pace to their lives.

Mr. Speaker, Commander Mike O'Neill has shown tremendous leadership and honor throughout his career with the Denver Police Department. Mike consistently exhibited selflessness to put the safety of the people he served first and foremost. It is my pleasure to recognize his career before this body of Congress and this nation. I thank him for his hard work and commitment to his fellow citizens and wish him all the best in his future endeavors.

A SPECIAL TRIBUTE TO THE VAN WERT COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY ON THE OCCASION OF ITS 50TH ANNIVERSARY

HON. PAUL E. GILLMOR

OF OHIO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, July 22, 2004

Mr. GILLMOR. Mr. Speaker, it is my great pleasure to pay special tribute to the Van Wert County Historical Society on the occasion of its fiftieth anniversary.

The Van Wert County Historical Society was born of the desire to preserve the history of a great county within the Fifth Congressional District of Ohio. The idea for a historical society first surfaced during Ohio's sesquicentennial in 1953. From overwhelming requests, members of the Van Wert Sesquicentennial Committee founded the Historical Society in 1954. While the Society was slow to start, a meeting on September 18, 1955, changed the course of history for the group. William Fosnaught, a local attorney and schoolteacher, presented the deed to a mansion which was donated to house the museum.

Since the 1955 donation of a mansion to the Historical Society, the group has expanded its grounds by adding a gazebo, barn, and log house, one-room schoolhouse, Conrail caboose and the annex building. In addition, the Historical Society boasts the only gazebo to be listed on the National Register of Historical Sites.

Mr. Speaker, what makes the Van Wert County Historical Society unique is that the mansion holds artifacts that represent the vast history of Van Wert County.

Mr. Speaker, I ask my colleagues to join me in paying special tribute to the Van Wert County Historical Society. Our communities are served well by having these societies to narrate history to future generations. However, it is the generous donations of artifacts and the volunteering of time by the people of Van Wert County which make the Historical Society a success. On behalf of the people of the